



CHOICES

Fall/Winter 2006 Newsletter

Issue 9

*Every child deserves
a permanent and loving family*

**THANK YOU for
the amazing
contributions we
have received from**

*Alcheringa Gallery
Bolen Books
Boomers Computer
Exchange
Cardinal Law
Chateau Victoria
Christine & Doug Allen
Cobs Bread
Ferreira Young
Genumark
Hayley Ikeda
Helijet International Inc
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Peter Berrang
Pierre Pomerleau
Quality Inn Hotel
Downtown
Rogers Chocolate
Save On Foods
Scarth & Associates
Starbucks
The Good Planet
Thrifty Foods
Truffles Catering*

**we greatly
appreciate your
support!**

Message from the Executive Director

Adoption is, on the whole, a very successful experience for most children, according to Richard Barth, a respected researcher in the adoption field. The question most adoptive parents want to know is: what makes adoptions more or less successful? We all want to be sure that we are in the "successful" group. The answer to this question may come from focusing on several studies conducted on the topic of adoption. The studies indicate that children who are adopted fare very well over time, and that adoption is beneficial for most children.

Agency practices that increase the success of adoptions include:

- An open approach to matching children and parents
- Accurate information, preferably given in a group format, before families accept children into their homes
- Encourage families to obtain early, compensatory education services for their children
- Help adoptive families develop expectations that are not wildly beyond what their adopted children can meet
- Offer flexible, longer-term post adoptive services

Other strategies that appear helpful are group, as opposed to individual homestudies and early contact with self-help groups or other adoptive families who can later provide support and possibly respite if needed.

Adoptive parent attributes that promote success include:

- Sensitivity to the specific needs of the child
- Flexible expectations, including the child's academic achievement
- Nurturing parents and an involved father
- Appropriate as opposed to rigid family rules

And last, but not least, (and this is from me, not the research!) a good sense of humour will help adoptive parents deal with most issues, including silly questions from folks who do not understand adoption.

Despite the research that shows adopted children fare well both socially and educationally, there is emerging data that adopted children may not have all the strengths that parents expect from their biological children. Being aware that adopted children may experience more problems in adolescence and early adulthood than biological children can help adoptive parents develop reasonable expectations---a critical component of successful adoptions.

We have found that families who attend our group Adoption Education Program are far better prepared for living with adoption than those that use only the self-study method along with their social worker. We believe that research bears out our contention that meeting with a group of other adoptive parents during the preparation period as an adjunct to the self-study broadens the understanding of adoption-related issues. Additionally, it often leads to informal support from other adoptive parents after placement.

For these important reasons, we are moving to make our group education program a mandatory component of our adoption preparation process. Beginning in the New Year we will expect all prospective adoptive parents to attend the group education sessions prior to receiving their Adoption Education Certificate. We acknowledge that this may be more difficult for those living in distant communities. However, CHOICES feels that the group education component provides families with an excellent opportunity for success in the adoption process.

Sandra Scarth



Welcome home to the following children who have been united with their forever families in the last few months!

**Ruby Alexander
Nya**

**Gabriela Jaime
Jade**

**Marcus Lina
Sophia
Meaghan**

**Alexander
Jenna**

**Alykhan Oksana
Sam**

**Keianna Sam
Basanti**

**Kyle Lilya
Olivia**

**Sera Damien
Marcus**

**Nateesa David
Aleksa**

**Mark Katie
Mia**

**Sofia Joshua
Max**

**Amanda Alison
Edela**

**Deanna Taiya
Jacob**

Tsion Tatjana



Aleksa

Does anyone know what it feels like to have Christmas, your birthday and winning the lotto all rolled into one? Well this is how adoption has been for us. The bumps along the way were many but we stuck with it. 2 1/2 years later after much planning, saving and praying we were blessed beyond our wildest dreams.

On May 29th, 2006 we arrived home from Vladivostok, Russia with our 11 1/2 month old daughter, Aleksa Nicole.

Life with Aleksa over the past 5 months has been wonderful. We prepared for the worst and got the best. Now at 16 months we have seen no issues associated with orphanage life such as bonding problems.

Aleksa is a healthy, active toddler that is on target developmentally for her age. She eats and sleeps well and loves to show off anything new she has learned. She makes us laugh on a daily basis and has begun to repeat everything we say. The best part is the unexpected hugs and kisses she loves to give. Aleksa is the light of our life and has not only made our house a home but has made us a forever family.

Jackie, Paul and Aleksa

Canadian Citizenship for children adopted abroad

The federal government has moved to make it easier for children adopted abroad to become Canadian citizens.

Bill C-14, An Act to Amend the Citizenship Act (Adoption), was introduced in the House of Commons on May 15, 2006 by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration (CIC), Monte Solberg. For the text of the bill, see www.parl.gc.ca/39/1/parlbus/chambus/house/bills/government/C-14/C-14_1/C-14-3E.html. Bill C-14 would amend the Citizenship Act so that children adopted abroad by Canadians could get Canadian citizenship without first having to become permanent residents, thus avoiding the usual immigration process. The amendment represents an important move to end the differential treatment of adopted children vs. children born to Canadians.

If the bill passes, a foreign-born adopted child would acquire Canadian citizenship as soon as the adoption is finalized, as long as the parents have applied for citizenship in the child's name before they leave Canada.

According to the CIC news release at www.cic.gc.ca/english/press/06/0603-e.html, the amendment will also benefit adoptive parents who have pending citizenship applications. Once the legislation takes effect, if the adopted child is found not to be eligible for citizenship under the current law, CIC will assess the application under the new law.

More information is available from the CIC Call Centre, 1-888-242-2100 or visit the Adoption Council of Canada website www.adoption.ca

National Child Day - November 20 A day to Celebrate

National Child Day was proclaimed by the Government of Canada on March 19th, 1993 to commemorate two historic events for children: the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child in 1959, and the UN adoption of the Convention of the Rights of the Child in 1989. This is the day when people across the country take time to celebrate Canada's most precious resource - our children. It's a day to remember that children need love and respect to grow to their full potential. It's a day to celebrate the family and think about how adults affect the development of children close to them.

Some ideas for celebrating National Child Day:

- donate time or money to a children's charity
- tell a child in your family what you love about them
- think back on the great moments of your childhood
- give extra hugs to a child in your life
- wear a royal blue ribbon for National Child Day

The blue ribbon shows that you think Canada's children deserve prime consideration in all economic, social and political decisions, policies, programs and expenditures.

CHOICES celebrates Adoption Awareness Month and National Child Day through hosting our annual Family Fun Day at Cedar Hill Recreation Centre, November 18th 1-3 pm. To register for this event, please contact Holly at CHOICES.

CHOICES For Children *Humanitarian Aid Fund*

The CHOICES for Children Humanitarian Aid Fund was launched at our Annual General Meeting on September 28, 2006. It is a trust fund that was founded by parents who have adopted internationally and wish to give back to the countries that enabled them to become parents. The goal is to provide aid to orphanages where the need is greatest, specifically in China, Nepal and Russia. In particular, the Fund aims to help the children who may never find an adoptive family.



**UPCOMING
EVENTS
ADOPTIVE
FAMILY FUN DAY**
*Join other adoptive
families at the
following events*



**VICTORIA
November 18**
1:00- 3:00pm
**Cedar Hill Rec Centre
Victoria**
- Magic Show
- face painting
and lots of fun and food!



SURREY
January 27 2007
12:30- 2:30pm
Guilford Rec. Centre
- lots of fun indoor
activities and food!

*These events are free
Just RSVP to CHOICES*



Meeting Groups

**CHOICES
Waiting Parent
Support Group**
The Waiting Parents Group
provides an opportunity for
families to make
connections, share stories,
learn from others'
experiences, and form
lifelong friendships with
other Adoptive Parents

**Starting
January 2007**



Monthly starting
Victoria January 11
Vancouver January 16



bi-monthly starting
Nanaimo January 25



If you are interested in working with the Fund's Advisory Committee, please call Holly Allen, Fund Secretary. Donations can be sent to CHOICES, noting that it is for the Choices for Children Humanitarian Aid Fund. You will receive a charitable receipt. We thank you on behalf of the children.

British Columbia's Waiting Children Profiles

The following child is currently in BC's foster care system and available for adoption. For more information, please call 1-877-ADOPT-07. Profiles are provided by the Ministry for Children and Family Development.

Kirsten

Birth date: November 2003 Cultural Background: European/North American

This charming, delightful and sweet little girl is Kirsten. Kirsten loves reading, listening to music and singing. She is also an active and energetic toddler who loves going to the park – her favourite playground equipment includes the swing and the slide.

Bubbly and likeable, Kirsten does really well with adults and other children. She shares the interests of other girls her age, yet Kirsten does show deficits in social and communication development. She has been diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder with borderline intellectual disability. Kirsten's challenging behaviours can include temper tantrums. Behaviour modification, therapeutic services and behavioural analysis are used to manage some of Kirsten's behaviours.

Physically, Kirsten is a healthy child who is meeting the milestones of her age group. Kirsten will be attending pre-school in September. It is already apparent that Kirsten is a quick learner and she excels in number recognition. She does need extra assistance with communication skills and she has made progress with the additional support she is receiving.

A delightful and loving child, Kirsten needs an adoptive home that is willing to work extensively with interventionists. She would do well in a family with or without children. Kirsten also would benefit a nurturing adoptive family who supports some openness with her current foster family.

Russia Adoption Program Update

On October 24th 2006, CHOICES was successfully registered as a Non-Governmental Organization with the Federal Registration Service of the Ministry of Justice in Moscow. This is the first step required in the re-accreditation process, and we are now awaiting final re-accreditation to be completed by the Ministry of Education and Science. Step one is new: it was introduced by the Law on Activities of Non-commercial Organizations, which came into effect on April 18, 2006 in the Russian Federation.

Last week, it was announced that the Adoption Decree 268 was signed by all ministries in the Russian Federation. The new Government Decision 654, as it is now referred to, outlines additional documentation required by all foreign adoption agencies wishing to become or renew accreditation with the Ministry of Education and Science. These required documents are now being sent for legalization and submission to Russian Authorities. One positive outcome of the new adoption decree is that agencies in good standing with the Ministry of Education will only have to renew their license in Russia every five years, as opposed to annually. We are optimistic that the re-accreditation process will be completed by early January 2007.

If you have any questions or concerns about your adoption from Russia, please contact Rachel Warren at CHOICES.

China Adoptions - Update

We understand that currently there is an expected wait for referrals from China due to an increase in applications for adoptions received at the China Centre of Adoption Affairs, CCAA (presently over 2,000 per month). Proposals might take between 18-24 months. We will update our clients once there is a change to these timelines. You may wish to contact your facilitator to inquire on the status of your application.

Ukraine Adoption Program Update

The newly established State Department for Adoptions in Kiev, Ukraine, will be accepting new applications for adoption from foreign applicants beginning January 2007. For those families registered with the NAC prior to the restructuring, appointment dates should be forthcoming in the next three months. Ukraine may also pass a new law concerning the age limits for adoptive applicants; they are proposing that there cannot be more than a 45 year difference between the adoptive parents and the child they wish to adopt. Parents have no choice in which region to adopt from – the referral will come directly from the SDA. Likewise, the Director of the SDA has clearly stated that there will be no pre-selection of children to be adopted by foreign parents. The SDA also requires all agencies wishing to work in the Ukraine to become registered. CHOICES is going through this process of registration, and hopes to be able to offer an in-house facilitation service for Ukraine adoptions early in 2007. Please refer to our website for updates on this new program.

**TRANS-RACIAL
PARENTING GROUP**

To register
contact Yvonne Devitt
at AFABC
(604) 320-7330
Upcoming Sessions:
Courtenay - November 18
Kelowna - November 25
Vancouver - January 6



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Recommended Reading "Beyond Good Intentions"

The author, Cheri Register is the mother of two adult daughters adopted as infants from Korea. She also wrote the highly regarded book "Are These Kids Yours?". Parents who adopt internationally have to grapple with a range of advice. Should they act as if they are colorblind or bolster their child's racial identity? Should they help their child assimilate or leap full force into the child's birth culture? It is a small, easy to read and engaging book that examines the pitfalls that well-meaning parents can easily slip into. Her essays examine such pitfalls as:

- Wiping Away our Children's Past
- Hovering Over our 'Troubled' Children
- Holding the Lid on Sorrow and Anger
- Parenting on the Defensive
- Believing Race Doesn't Matter
- Keeping Our Children Exotic
- Believing Adoption Saves Souls
- Appropriating Our Children's Heritage

I think this is a **must read** for all parents, who are adopting children trans racially. It is available for purchase from the Adoptive Families Association of B.C. You can also check your local library.

Carmen Burnay, RSW

Our Adoption Story

Our adoption story began in December 2003. Through a mutual friend we met a couple who just returned from Russia with a beautiful boy. During our conversation, we knew we were meant to adopt a child from Russia. We struggled through so many delays locally and through Russia and kept the faith until that glorious day arrived in May 2006 for our much awaited invitation to Russia. We were filled with joyous thoughts mixed with apprehension. We arrived in Russia to warm, smiling faces and were overwhelmed when we heard that "our little girl was waiting for us"! The next morning we met the most precious angel who would soon become our daughter, Jenna. Her large blue eyes focused intently on us as she wondered who we were and why we spoke so strangely. We spend five amazing days getting to know our little girl and with heavy hearts boarded a plane to return home. The wait between trips was difficult but we busied ourselves with paperwork, baby shopping and preparing our home for a toddler.

The second flight to Russia was unforgettable. We were so excited and could not believe that we would become parents very soon. The supportive coordinator, translator and driver became friends and filled our "days off" with stories of their homeland, sightseeing and of course a few laughs in between. Their support helped us with the stressful days of getting ready for court and preparing to take our daughter home. As each day passed, our little angel became more familiar with us and her comfort level increased. Jenna became a "Daddy's girl" with "Dada" being the only word she spoke while in Russia. We began to see her true personality come forward. We experienced her playfulness, her inquisitiveness, her ability to demand attention and her warm loving side. Bringing Jenna home to Canada to her new home was surreal. We were finally parents! Jenna has made our house a home. Our daughter's ability to adapt to her new surroundings is very fascinating to watch. Within a few weeks, Jenna started walking, babbling, and saying a few words, blowing kisses and eating and drinking a variety of foods. The anxiety and worries of adoption melted away when one evening she awoke in her crib and with outstretched arms, she looked into my eyes and said "Mama".

We relish the precious moments of snuggling while reading a book, giggling at Jenna trying to sing a Keith Urban song and counting her little toes while reciting "This Little Piggy".

Our family is grateful to Rachel and Agnes for their professionalism, ingenuity and compassion. We took such comfort in Rachel's emails and calls all hours of the day and night. Her ability to reassure us helped us stay the course.

We firmly believe that life has its own time clock. Now we know that the struggles and delays were meant to be in order to meet Jenna. We look at her and know that we are so blessed to have this beautiful child in our lives to brighten our days. She is a true gift of divine intervention! As one very wise and remarkable lady in Russia told us "Adoptions are made in the heavens- we simply do the paperwork!"

Debbie, Glenn and Jenna!

CHOICES Open House & Fundraise A great Success

Well over seventy people attended CHOICES Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Fundraiser on September 28th. There was standing room only for Dr. Sue Kalaher's talk on issues around intercountry adoption. An adoptive parent herself, Dr. Kalaher brought a humorous, down to earth approach to the issues most parents face after the euphoria of the placement. During the AGM, we honoured our founding board members, most of whom were in attendance. Judith Armstrong, J. Victor Belknap, T. Donald Bingham, Joanne Burgess, Patricia Calveley, Joyce Masselink, Lynn Lawrence, and Daphne Williams.

After the keynote speaker, adoptive parents, children, staff and board members mingled while listening to a live jazz trio and bidding on the silent auction items. One unanticipated bidding war resulted when two young children desperately wanted the same pearl necklace, however in the end, both went home with a small jewelry item. A total of \$4,050 was raised from the silent auction. We are hoping to reach our goal of \$5,000 for Sagarmatha orphanage in Nepal. All the money raised will go to this orphanage to provide beds, bedding and warm winter clothing because winters can be severe and there is no central heating in most buildings in Nepal. We wish to thank all of the sponsors who generously donated items to our silent auction. We aim to organize an annual silent auction at our AGM, and look forward to raising even more funds for orphanages we work with in the years to come.